

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAA-01 SES-02 SSM-03 IO-13
ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 HA-05 /102 W
-----077953 111135Z /13

O P 111042Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9615
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 5272

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: SEPTEMBER 11, 1978, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 5237 (DTG 100942Z SEP 78)

1. FIGHTING IN BEIRUT.

A. FIGHTING BETWEEN SYRIAN SOLDIERS AND CHRISTIAN
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MILITIAS IS CONTINUING, ALTHOUGH MOST SHELLING STOPPED
ABOUT 0530 HOURS ON SEPTEMBER 10. THE MAIN CENTER OF
COMBAT IS THE AYN AR-RUMMANEH AREA. SOME SHELLS
FELL ON ASHRAFIYAH FROM ABOUT 1400 TO 1420 HOURS ON
SEPTEMBER 10 AND DURING THE NIGHT OF SEPTEMBER 10-11. IN
ADDITION, "MANY" MORTAR ROUNDS FELL NEAR BAABDA PALACE
DURING THE NIGHT, ACCORDING TO AN RSO EMPLOYEE

AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE IN YARZE.

B. ACCORDING TO ONE DATT SOURCE, THE LEBANESE ARMY BATTALION AT RUMIYAH, A FIERCELY PRO-MARONITE UNIT, FIRED ON SYRIAN TROOPS AT HAZMIYAH ON SEPTEMBER 10. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO MARINE GUARDS WHO WERE AT YARZE EARLIER THIS MONTH, LEBANESE SOLDIERS GUARDING THE PALACE OCCASIONALLY FIRED ON THE SYRIANS DURING FIGHTING ON SEPTEMBER 3-4. THIS MAY EXPLAIN WHY MORTAR ROUNDS HIT NEAR BAABDA PALACE ON SEPTEMBER 3 (SEE SEPTEMBER 4 SITREP).

C. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR HAS CALLED THE FIGHTING THE BATTLE OVER RENEWAL OF THE ADF MANDATE. (COMMENT: THE MANDATE OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES EXPIRES ON OCTOBER 27. ITS RENEWAL WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 12). WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT THE FIGHTING IS ESSENTIALLY MORE OF THE CYCLICAL VIOLENCE BETWEEN SYRIANS AND CHRISTIANS WHICH HAS PLAGUED LEBANON SINCE THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS IN FEBRUARY, AND WHICH IS A MANIFESTATION OF A GENERAL STRUGGLE FOR INFLUENCE WITHIN THE COUNTRY BETWEEN THE MARONITE PARTIES AND THE SYRIANS.

2. RENEWAL OF ADF MANDATE.

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A. CAMILLE CHAMOUN HAS DENOUNCED IN SCATHING TERMS PRIME MINISTER AL HOSS' STATEMENT ON SEPTEMBER 9 THAT THE ADF HAD TO REMAIN IN LEBANON UNTIL THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS REBUILT (SEE SEPTEMBER 10 SITREP). CALLING THE PRIME MINISTER A "WEAK PERSONALITY" WITH A "DEFEATIST MENTALITY," CHAMOUN SAID:

(1) "I DO NOT FIND WORDS TO EXPRESS MY ADMIRATION FOR THE RESISTANCE OF THE LEBANESE FIGHTER, WHETHER HE BE IN HADATH, AYN AR-RUMMANEH, TAHWITA, BADARO, ASHRAFIYAH, OR ANYWHERE ELSE. HE HAS SHOWN, IN ADDITION TO THE SENSE OF NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY THAT HE IS ASSUMING, A COURAGE AND A SPIRIT OF PERSEVERENCE INHERITED FROM HIS ANCESTORS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 5272

2) "TO THESE YOUNG MEN, TO THE CIVILIANS WHO SUPPORT THEM
EFFECTIVELY AND TO THE PUBLIC OPINION WHICH STANDS
BY THEIR SIDE, I ADDRESS THE GREETINGS OF A FATHER, OF
A BROTHER, AND OF A FIGHTER."

B. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO THE SEPTEMBER 10 EDITION OF
THE EGYPTIAN NEWSPAPER AL AHAM, THE GOL HAS ASKED
THE ARAB LEAGUE TO PUT OFF ANY DECISION CONCERNING
THE RENEWAL OF THE ADF MANDATE. DESPITE THE REQUEST,
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AL AHAM REPORTED THAT A COMPROMISE FORMULA WOULD BE
PUT FORTH AT THE COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 12, WHEREBY THE
MANDATE WOULD BE RENEWED FOR THREE MONTHS, AFTER WHICH IT
WOULD EXPIRE.

3. PALESTINIAN WARNING.

ACCORDING TO THE PALESTINE NEWS AGENCY Wafa, A PALESTINIAN SPOKESMAN WARNED ON SEPTEMBER 8 THAT THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION "WILL NOT STAND IDLY BY REGARDING THE BIG ISOLATIONIST-ZIONIST-IMPERIALIST CONSPIRACY IN LEBANON. . ." (COMMENT: PALESTINIANS HAVE SO FAR STAYED OUT OF THE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND CHRISTIANS. WE BELIEVE THE PALESTINIANS WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO AVOID PARTICIPATION IN THE FIGHTING, UNLESS THERE IS DIRECT ISRAELI INTERVENTION. END COMMENT.)

4. JOINT COMMITTEE FORMED.

MEANWHILE, THE PRO-SYRIAN NATIONAL FRONT (WHICH INCLUDES ASSIM QANSUH'S BAATH PARTY) AND THE LEFTIST NATIONAL MOVEMENT (WHICH INCLUDES WALID JUMBLATT'S PSP) ISSUED A STATEMENT ON SEPTEMBER 8 ANNOUNCING THE FORMATION OF A "JOINT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL ACTION IN LEBANON" TO DEAL WITH CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS. (COMMENT: JUMBLATT REMAINS DEEPLY HOSTILE TO THE SYRIANS, AND WE DO NOT EXPECT THIS COMMITTEE TO REPRESENT MORE THAN A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE. END COMMENT.)

5. ISRAELI OVERFLIGHTS.

ISRAELI PLANES ARE NOW MAKING VIRTUALLY DAILY OVERFLIGHTS
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OVER BEIRUT. ON SEPTEMBER 10 TWO ISRAELI JETS BROKE
THE SOUND BARRIERS OVER BEIRUT AT 1230 HOURS.
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